

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 6-8, 10, and 12-21. The Examiner objected to claims 5 and 9 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Examiner also allowed claims 22-26. Applicants canceled claim 11 in a previous communication. Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating the allowable subject matter of claims 5, 9, and 22-26.

Claims 1 and 13 have been amended by this Response to further clarify certain aspects of the claimed subject matter. Upon entry of the amendments, claims 1-10 and 12-26 will remain pending in the present application. Applicants respectfully assert that all of the pending claims are patentable and in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the pending claims.

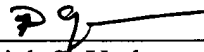
Applicants also thank the Examiner for her participation in a telephonic interview with the undersigned representative on February 17, 2004. In this interview, the claims of the present patent application and the prior art of record were generally discussed. Particularly, during the interview, Applicants' representative and the Examiner agreed upon amendments to claims 1 and 13 that more particularly point out and distinctly claim certain subject matter which Applicants regard as their invention. By the present Response, claims 1 and 13 have been amended in the agreed upon manner. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 13, and their respective dependent claims, are believed allowable over the art of record. Additionally, the absence of any substantive rejection of claims 2-4 in the Final Office Action was discussed. However, this deficiency is believed moot in light of the agreement reached with respect to the independent claims. For the reasons provided above, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the outstanding rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 and allowance of all pending claims.

Conclusion

In view of the remarks set forth above, Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner believes that a telephonic interview will help speed this application toward issuance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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